

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 109

By Harper

A RESOLUTION to urge law enforcement, school officials, the judiciary, community leaders, and the business community to work together to address truancy.

WHEREAS, Tennessee is ranked as the ninth worst state in the nation for truancy, and students who are chronically truant typically fall behind in grade level and drop out of school; and

WHEREAS, truancy has been shown to be the first and best indicator that a child will drop out of school, use marijuana for the first time, and commit juvenile crimes by the age of fifteen; truancy has also been found to be a risk factor for substance abuse and teen pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, chronic truants often miss more days of school than they attend; absentee rates relate directly to graduation rates and are highest in public schools in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the causes of truancy can be linked to a combination of characteristics of the student, including low grades in reading and mathematics and negative attitudes toward school or teachers; characteristics of the student's family, including parents who do not value education, did not complete school, or were truant themselves; and characteristics of the school, including inconsistent attendance policies, lack of parental involvement in the school, or lack of expectations for high student achievement; and

WHEREAS, it has been demonstrated that when truancy is addressed, there is a reduction in the rates of daytime crime, juvenile crime, drug use, and delinquency; and

WHEREAS, effective truancy reduction programs can take many forms and can be implemented in many different settings, including in schools and courts and through community programs; and

WHEREAS, truancy prevention programs focused on middle grade students are key to preventing future dropouts; and

WHEREAS, truancy reduction programs are highly cost effective, reduce juvenile and adult crime, and save taxpayer money; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we recognize the significant harm of chronic truancy to the State of Tennessee, acknowledge the work being done by truancy prevention programs, and encourage law enforcement, school officials, the judiciary, community leaders, and the business community to work together to address truancy.